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DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Note by the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Mrs. Erica-Irene A. Daes

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

1. In its resolution 48/163 of 21 December 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, commencing on 10 December 1994, the period from 1 January to 9 December 1994 to be set aside for planning for the Decade in partnership with indigenous people.

2. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1993/26 of 4 March 1994, invited indigenous organizations to consider the contributions they could make to the success of the Decade through specific objectives programmes and activities with a view to presenting them to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and requested the Working Group to identify possible programmes, projects and activities in connection with the Decade and to submit them, through the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-first session.

3. As set forth in General Assembly resolution 48/163, the goal of the Decade is "the strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health". For this to be achieved, the General Assembly expressed its awareness of the need "to build on the results and lessons" of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

4. In that spirit, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group has prepared the following draft programme of activities, based chiefly upon the uncompleted aspects of the programme of activities for the International Year, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 45/164, and the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the third Reconvened Technical Meeting on the International Year, contained in document E/CN.4/1994/86.

5. The Chairperson-Rapporteur also drew upon the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development contained in document A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (chap. 26 of agenda 21) to which the General Assembly specifically referred in its resolution 48/163, and the report of the Consultation between representatives of indigenous peoples and international development, human rights and other agencies, held in New York on 11 December 1992 (E/CN.4/1993/AC.4/TM.3/1).

6. The Chairperson-Rapporteur took into account the conclusions and recommendations of the three meetings of governmental and indigenous experts which have thus far been convened under the auspices of the Centre for Human Rights. These were: the Seminar on the effects of racism and racial discrimination on the social and economic relations between indigenous peoples and States, held at Geneva from 16 to 20 January 1989 (E/CN.4/1989/22); the Meeting of Experts to review the experience of countries in the operation of schemes of internal self-government for indigenous peoples, held at Nuuk, Greenland, from 24 to 28 September 1991 (E/CN.4/1992/42 and Add.1); and the technical conference on practical experience in the realization of sustainable and environmentally sound self-development of indigenous peoples, held at Santiago from 18-22 May 1992 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/31 and Add.1).

7. It should be borne in mind that the following draft programme of activities was intended solely for the purpose of stimulating an open, wide-ranging and constructive dialogue with indigenous peoples at the twelfth session of the Working Group, and that the views of indigenous peoples themselves will determine what recommendations are eventually made, through the Sub-Commission, to the Commission on Human Rights.

Draft programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

I. Thematic structure of the Decade

1995 Social development and the family;

1996 Subsistence, survival and health;

1997 Language, education and cultural integrity;

1998 Protecting spiritual and cultural heritage;

1999 Restoring relationships with land and resources;

2000 Achieving environmentally-sound development;

2001 Law, justice, individual rights and dignity;

2002 Self-government and self-determination;

2003 Indigenous peoples in peace and security;

2004 Partnership in international governance.

II. Activities at the international level

A. United Nations observances to draw attention to the aims and activities of the International Decade

(i) A formal opening-day ceremony conducted by the Secretary-General in New York in connection with the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, with speakers representing indigenous peoples of the world;

(ii) A formal observance each year on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, in New York and at the offices of the United Nations regional commissions, focusing on the theme for that year and with the participation of indigenous speakers;

(iii) Official observance of the Decade, with speakers representing indigenous peoples from different regions of the world, as part of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and other international conferences related to the aims and themes of the Decade;

(iv) Convening a conference of governmental and indigenous experts each year, devoted to the theme of that year, in a different region of the world, with the widest possible participation of indigenous people and non-governmental organizations from the host country and region;

(v) Priority consideration to the adoption, as early as possible, during the Decade of the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, with the widest possible publicity;

(vi) Issuance of a special series of stamps by the United Nations Postal Administration highlighting the goals and thematic structure of the Decade, including human rights, environment, development, health and education in relation to indigenous peoples;

(vii) An international conference in 2005 evaluating progress made during the Decade, and remaining to be made, in addressing the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples.

B. United Nations public information activities

(i) Production and widest possible dissemination of a series of posters in official and indigenous languages, highlighting the global diversity and fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, using designs commissioned from indigenous artists;

(ii) Annual public service announcements in the print media, and production and wide distribution of special programmes in the radio series of the Department of Public Information, aimed at both general and indigenous audiences, utilizing indigenous artists, musicians and personalities;

(iii) Speaker series at United Nations Information Centres and the branch campuses of the United Nations University, utilizing indigenous artists, elders and scholars, and following the thematic structure of the Decade;

(iv) Publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the draft United Nations declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples, in at least 20 indigenous languages;

(v) Production, by 1998, of a comprehensive atlas and statistical overview of the indigenous peoples of the world, to be distributed as a United Nations sales publication;

(vi) Annual publication, to commence by 1998, of a statistical and analytical report on "The state of the world's indigenous peoples";

(vii) Organizing, by 1999, of an international trade fair promoting indigenous peoples' arts and products, as well as identifying products which are linked with the destruction of indigenous peoples;

(viii) Organizing, through the Centre for Human Rights, of a series of national-level seminars for Governments and indigenous peoples, on the rights of indigenous peoples and national mechanisms for improving the enjoyment of their rights.

C. United Nations system operational activities

(i) Convening, by 1999, of the first session of a permanent forum of the world's indigenous people, and establishing a permanent unit in the secretariat to service the forum and to coordinate United Nations operational activities;

(ii) Convening an annual consultation of the United Nations system and other related international institutions with indigenous peoples, to promote coordinated action on the needs of indigenous peoples, and to evaluate specific initiatives and activities;

(iii) Adoption, by every United Nations operational programme and specialized agency, of a specific procedure in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1992/255, to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples at the national level in the design and evaluation of projects which may affect them, with full respect for their rights;

(iv) Appointment of a focal point for indigenous peoples in every United Nations operational programme and specialized agency, with the mandate to ensure liaison and coordination with indigenous peoples as well as other parts of the United Nations system;

(v) Special initiatives, by United Nations operational programmes and specialized agencies, to support concrete projects for indigenous communities in areas related to the goal and themes of the Decade, in particular the establishment of networks of indigenous organizations and communities for the sharing of information and expertise, and the strengthening of indigenous peoples' own institutions;

(vi) Preparation of a handbook containing basic guidelines and concise information on the relevant activities of United Nations operational programmes and specialized agencies, for the widest possible distribution worldwide in both official and indigenous languages;

(vii) Recruitment of indigenous expertise by operational programmes and specialized agencies through regular staff employment, secondment, special contracts and consultancies, in particular for the design and implementation of projects affecting indigenous communities;

(viii) Establishment of special internship positions for indigenous students throughout the United Nations system, and of a youth exchange programme in cooperation with indigenous communities;

(ix) Launching of a campaign, through the Centre for Human Rights and the International Labour Organisation, to strengthen awareness of international legal instruments relating to indigenous peoples, and to promote their ratification and implementation;

(x) Ensuring that all United Nations activities relating to the Decade are planned, implemented and evaluated in full partnership with indigenous peoples at all levels.

III. Activities by individual Member States

(i) Designation of a lead department or agency, and appointment of a high-level administrative coordinator for activities relating to the Decade;

(ii) Appointment, in full partnership with indigenous peoples, of an indigenous person as national ambassador for the Decade, to promote national awareness of and contributions to the Decade, and participate in relevant United Nations meetings during the Decade on behalf of the Member State;

(iii) Establishment of a national committee for the Decade composed of eminent indigenous and non-indigenous persons, with the mandate to plan, implement and evaluate national activities in collaboration with indigenous peoples and communities;

(iv) Launching of public information campaigns on the situation of the indigenous peoples of the country, and respect for their rights, including the publication of books, posters and educational materials by and about indigenous peoples, special programmes on national radio and television, and public service announcements in the mass media;

(v) Convening of national policy conferences on issues identified as priorities by indigenous peoples, in collaboration with indigenous community leaders and scholars;

(vi) Promoting cooperative artistic, cultural and other activities involving the indigenous peoples of neighbouring countries, including trade and regional exchanges of expertise;

(vii) Facilitating the participation of indigenous representatives at meetings of the United Nations and other international meetings, in particular the greater involvement of indigenous women and youth;

(viii) In partnership with indigenous peoples, preparing a report to the United Nations on plans for national activities by 1996, and a final report on the results of the Decade by 2004;

(ix) Making generous financial contributions to the success of the Decade, either directly to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Decade or through bilateral or multi-bilateral development assistance programmes.